TNSRECORDS

uk punk and ska

free fanzine

aug/sept 08

goldblade, the shadowcops, sonic boom six

strummer camp 2008 feature

ISSUE 3

It's been a long time in coming, but here is issue three of TNSrecords fanzine. I initially planned to get this out in July (so that the Strummer Camp stuff wasn't three months old haha), but I've been so snowed under with label stuff, touring with the Psychotronic Man, various festivals and my actual real job, that it's just been put on the backburner… so sorry!
Anyway, I pleased to announce that we have a brand new TNS release, a split ep between ska/reggae/punk heroes, Harijan and the John Player Specials. I know you are going to love this CD so check out the info about it later in the issue and pick yourself up a copy.
I can also announce that the next release on TNSrecords will be the long awaited full length album from the Shadowcops, who I also interview later in the issue. We hope to have this out before the end of the year, which is pretty exciting stuff!

I also hope to get one more fanzine out in 2008 too, so if you fancy contributing get in touch, it's always nice to hear what other people have to say about music.

A big thanks goes out to Nathan who has pimped up our website.
Check it out at tnsrecords.co.uk. You can also access the webstore/distro from here. We have absolutely loads of new stock available through our distro and ALL cds and vinyls are just £4.

We also have loads of top TNS nights lined up before the end of the year so check out the gig guide.

I'm hoping to have this issue available by August bank holiday weekend for Ignition Festival at the Retro bar, Manchester, the BETTER alternative to Leeds festival.
TNS have teamed up with our good friends at Bomb Ibiza and Slit Records to put on a 3 day DIY punk and ska festival, which we are all really looking forward to, so you can expect a full report next issue.

Anyway, I hope you enjoy this issue and I hope to catch some of you at a gig soon!

Contact me at: thatsnotskanking@hotmail.com for fanzine stuff
Tim 'Bev' Bevington at:
tnsrecordsuk@hotmail.co.uk for label stuff
And also check out:
myspace.com/thatsnotskankingrecords and tnsrecords.co.uk

This issue was put together by Moz, Dave Adair and myself, Andy. The cover photo and other photography is by Bev and artwork and layout is also by me.
Cheers to Do the Dog, Mild Peril and everyone who sent me stuff. If you wanna send CDs for review, drop me an email and I'll tell you where to send them.

TNSreleases are available from the following shops/distros:
Roadkill Records, Manchester
Piccadilly Records, Manchester
Rockers, Manchester
Action Records, Preston
Vibes Records, Bury
Jumbo Records, Leeds
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Interpunk
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...and from:
all the bands
TNSrecords Distro:
tnsrecords.co.uk

Support your local record shops and your underground music scene!

HARIJAN VS JOHN PLAYER SPECIALS SPLIT EP

TNSrecords are proud to announce our 3rd release, a 6 track ep between Harijan and the John Player Specials

Photos by Tim 'Bev' Bevington

HARIJAN

Harijan have been building up a solid and loyal following around the North-West for around 4 or 5 years now. Their sound is firmly rooted in reggae and ska, but with heavier moments, which have punk and metal leanings thrown in to give a diverse and original sound. Their track, Curriculum Vitae, was a real favourite from the TNS compilation and it has resulted in airplay in the UK and further a field. The three new tracks on this ep continue to show that Harijan are one of the UKs best up and coming ska bands and build towards the album they are planning for early next year.

Harijans tracks on this ep are: Portland Street, the Bee's n E's and Hallux Valgus.

JOHN PLAYER SPECIALS

The **John Player Specials** have made a huge impact on the North-West punk and ska scene in a relatively short space of time and are now established as one of the most exciting young bands around. Like Harijan, their sound is firmly rooted in a reggae and ska, offering chilled out skanking tunes with great melodic choruses. The Wigan based four piece recorded a well received ep with Manchester producer Tim G earlier this year and these three tracks are an excellent follow up to that debut release.

The John Player Specials tracks on the split ep are: Weak In Your Eyes, When All Is Said and Done and Renegade

available from: tnsrecords.co.uk for £4

new release

sept 08

WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR MUSIC FROM?

I have ranted about where people buy their music from in depth in the past and also, this rant is probably aimed at completely the wrong people, as to be fair if you can be arsed to read a cheaply printed black and white fanzine, you are probably very supportive of your local underground scene, whatever your taste in music, but recently I have really noticed how small independent record stores, labels and distros have been hit by download culture and it is a real shame. Obviously with starting this label, I have become even more aware of the problems faced by the smaller distributors of music.

In Manchester, we are more aware of the problem than in most places as Roadkill Records came very close to closing down a few months ago. However, as TNS has built as a label and we have got our releases stocked by more and more independent stores and distros, I have noticed just how much people are beginning to struggle.
I recently visited Selecta-Disk in Nottingham, which was once one of the most thriving record stores in the country, to find that half of it had shut down.
Maybe I'm just romantic about the idea of an independent record shop in a High Fidelity or an Empire Records kinda way, but I really genuinely think that you can not ever replace going into a shop and buying the album you have waited months for and physically holding it in your hand, by downloading mp3s and printing out the cover. It will never be the same.
But even if you don't share that view there are many other reasons why we should buy our music from the 'small man'. If you are reading this fanzine I can only presume that you have an interest in your own local underground music scene. In general, it's the people who run the small local stores, distros and labels who are doing it for the more genuine reasons, i.e. to support the music we all love and to help it to thrive at grass roots level.

Speaking from the perspective of someone who has just started a label, I have to say, we are perhaps in a better position than most independent stores. For starters, we are not trying to make a living from this, whereas running a record store involves being open for long hours, paying rent, etc, etc. Also, the CDs we have released are not widely available for download and the people who are into these bands are the sort of people who go to lots of gigs and often will buy CDs directly from the bands themselves. Most people I know who run distros also do not do this as a full time thing and obviously their target audience is also mainly gig goers, who tend to buy more CDs.

Whilst record stores do make some profit from small underground releases they also sit in an awkward position in the middle of the underground and the mainstream.
The sort of person who traditionally bought their music from the independent store is never going to be the sort of person who is waiting for some sort of mainstream big label release. I would imagine that most people who are into alternative music would already avoid buying new releases from HMV type shops.
It's the in-between sort of bands that independent shops have made their living from traditionally; specialist music, that only a person with a vested interest in a particular genre would be knowledgeable about, but music which isn't so obscure that it cannot be downloaded illegally.

It is this that I think is really hurting record stores; the albums that people would traditionally have bought from their local store, but that they now download illegally.
Now I know I'm getting on my high horse and that there are other reasons why people can not always buy their CDs, such as the recession or the increased cost of living of late meaning that people have had to cut down on their luxury items. On the other hand however, I also feel that it is important that people really try to support their underground scene, or it will just go under and that would be a real shame!
I'm certainly not telling people what to do with their money, but next time you are listening to a new album on your i-pod, which you have downloaded for free, spare a thought for your local music store and how much the tenner you could have spent on that CD could have helped them out and also how much nicer it would be to have an actual CD or vinyl with the proper artwork on your shelf at home.

The internet can be a great tool for promoting up and coming bands and making people aware of some great music, but it also promotes laziness and downloading all your music for free is killing your local scene slowly but surely, so try to help out the people who do really need your help when you are acquiring music! It will help the local scene to progress and it will be a very, very sad state of affairs if in 5 years time you can't walk into your local record shop and pick up the new album by your favourite band.
Andy

The Shadowcops

The Shadowcops have been getting rave reviews over the past year for their riff-tastic punk n' roll/Brit rock sound, which draws influence from the likes of the Wildhearts, Husker Du and the Replacements. These guys are real TNS favourites and we will be releasing their album in the not to distant future. I guarantee it will be awesome, but to whet your appetite check out theshadowcops.co.uk for gig listings and treat yourself to one of the loudest and most rocking live shows around!

TNS) How did it all start for the Shadowcops? Can you give us a brief history?

Nat) I've always been in a band since being 16 and there was this brief period of a few weeks in 2004 where I was bandless. I couldn't stand it for much longer so I called Mackle up and our friend Scott and decided to try out a couple of tunes I'd written and it snowballed from there really.

Mackle) Once I got back out of the joint what else is there to do other than rock n roll music?

Mike A) I met the others at a Goodfellas Appreciation Society meeting. Nat and I got into an argument about whether Joe Pesci looked like a clown and decided that forming a band was the best way to solve things.

Mike P) I joined in the fun when I moved home from University in 2006.

TNS) You love your riffs! What influences this riff bias and how does your songwriting process work?

Mike A) Well, like right little sissies we all make each other mix-tapes full of amazing songs chocked full of awe inspiring riffs. We steal the riffs, shout over the top, and hope that everyone has a bad memory and can't remember the originals.

Mackle) All the best songs have amazing intro or mid riffs that get you listening instantly, Van Halen, Deep Purple, Led Zep, Burt Weedon etc all classics. Thats where I'm coming from!

Mike P) We do indeed love our riffs, and it's simply as a result of the music we like. There are far too many whiney cunts knocking about at the minute – I, however, like music to have some bollocks about it, and there's nowt with more bollocks than a big, meaty riff. Songwriting can come about in a number of different ways, whether it be myself or Nathan turning up to practice with a finished song, but usually it's more a case of someone will come up with that initial riff and then everyone will throw their ideas in until we stumble upon a full song.

Nat) The need to rock out on a regular basis provides our collective hunger for the riff. The bigger sounding, the better. The louder, the better.

TNS) You did a full UK tour earlier in the year and also recently did a brief jaunt with Muscle Car and the Hip Priests. How did these go and after the tour experience what are your thoughts about the UK underground scene? How does Manchester compare to other places you have played?

Mike P) The Muscle Car/Hip Priest tour was a lot of fun indeed, possibly because it was completely impromptu. To end up nude in the English Channel off Brighton at 7am on a Sunday morning when you'd just expected to be playing a couple of quiet gigs in the North on Thursday was something else haha. Touring is my favourite aspect of all this, and at this stage it's all about trying to spread the Shadowcops word. The gigs we play on tour can vary so dramatically from 10 people to 100+ people so we just take them as they come. Manchester's always good for us, but it's like any other city – you just have to make sure you play for the right people and in the right setting.

Mackle) Manchester can be up and down with gigs, like everywhere sometimes there can be a good turn out, others not so good. But then again who has heard of us on scale where we can play a gig and its going to be packed out, I can answer that question, no one. If you get enough exposure and have a decent tune then the gigs are gonna be rammed but to even attempt to get to this you have to go and out and do it on a grand scale, it wont just happen for you, it wont just turn up on your doorstep in a Geffen envelope delivered by Rivers Cuomo! Although we are working on this at the moment, maybe 200 gigs in 180 days
Mike A) We played some great gigs on the tour, and I thought I was particularly astonishing. The most amazing thing was actually getting paid to play a TNS gig, it was like being rewarded for going to your local.

TNS) So, Revenge of the Psychotronic Man set you some tour challenges and I believe you have completed just one out of about ten to date and also that you slept in Travelodges every night. Revenge of... on the other hand completed nearly all of the challenges you set and guitarist, Matt Woods got Mike Pollitt's name, incorrectly spelt, tattooed on his arm just to hammer home the victory. How do you sleep at night?
Mackle) How do I sleep at night? Horizontally and with my eyes closed.
Mike A) We didn't sleep in Travelodges every night, once we stayed in a 4 bedroom house in Guildford. Some days are just too hard to survive.
Mike P) It's because we're low excuses for human beings and there's no excusing it really – I promise we'll do better on the next tour. I'm just worried now because of Matt's tattoo, that means I have to somehow top that. Fuck!

Top: Matt's 'Mike Pollitte' tattoo
Bottom: Yes he is!

TNS) We are expecting your full length album to be released before the end of the year. What can we expect from this release and where would you hope the Shadowcops to be within the next year?
Nat) Our debut album will be sure to blow your head to pieces from start to finish and leave you lustfully craving more. Each and every track is a fucking corker and has been through a rigorous writing and refining process. Couple that with TimG's recording and producing genius and you've got an end product that deserves to be listened to.
Mackle) Big tunes, more big thank you lists etc. Within the year, I dunno, Wembley Arena, maybe watch John Fogerty there again?!
Mike P) I'm very excited about this album. There are a few songs we've been playing live for a while now and also some completely new efforts. I'd say expect even bigger riffs, even catchier choruses and even ballsier rock n' roll solos than "Ready When You Are."

I think the next logical step for us, and where I'd like to be next year, is to try and get on a named tour support, this would do wonders to spread the profile nationwide more effectively. There are also a couple of other things in the pipeline. We've been offered an Australian tour, which is very exciting, and something we can hopefully get going for about September next year, and also keep your eyes peeled for news on a Shadowcops music video which is currently being formulated.

The Shadowcops will be playing at TNS at Retro Bar on Monday 10th November, with Sounds of Swami, the Rocket Polishers, the Nova Fives and the Medicine Bow, for just £3! Be there!

Interview by Andy

STRUMMERCAMP FESTIVAL 2008
Bowdon Rugby Club, 23, 24, 25 May

The annual festival, celebrating the life of Joe Strummer

I don't think I've ever met anyone who doesn't like the Clash, and that really says a lot.
It's not just people into punk and ska who value this band, but it's obviously in these areas where the band has had it's biggest impact and their influence can be seen in so many of today's bands. The Clash were innovators; they never shied away from breaking boundaries in music and experimentation and their attitude paved the way for so much good stuff happening to music. They have such an impressive back catalogue and for me they brought a bit more intelligence to the initial punk onslaught. Although I wasn't around at the birth of the punk rock movement it seems to me that whilst a lot of early punk was about everything in the world being shit, it didn't really offer all that many solutions and this for me was how the Clash differed. Whilst they acknowledged the world has its problems they were more about making something of yourself despite what you are up against and finding solutions and that for me is why punk isn't dead and continues to thrive today, despite what the mainstream seems to think. That attitude is for me why punk isn't particularly an image or even necessarily a specific sound, it's about so much more than that. The Clash were a fantastic band and it is great that this festival acknowledges their contribution to music and their continued influence to contemporary music. I think that the fact Strummer Camp had such a varied line up and also mixed older bands and more established acts with more up and coming bands really paid homage to the Clash quite nicely.
So anyway onto the festival, and in true punk fashion they experienced many problems, including one Tory mp (typical) nearly throwing a spanner completely in the works by stopping the festival being held at it's original site in Macclesfield.

SATURDAY

For various reasons I didn't make Sham 69 on the Friday night so I passed on reviewing duties to Liam Revenge. Unfortunately a broken down van meant that he didn't make it either, so it was Saturday before we arrived, very excited about seeing the Beat later on that evening. The weather couldn't have been any better, in fact it was perfect weather to start drinking very early so if this review is a little incoherent, blame the cider.
The whole weekend was compered admirably by Attilla the Stokebroker who interspersed music with poetry and also performed with his band, Barnstormer.
He was followed by Take the 5th, a Clash covers band. The songs were executed well and it was good to hear some great songs played live, so I enjoyed this, despite having a few issues with cover bands personally.

attilla the stockbroker

take the 5th

photography by tim 'bev' bevington

These were followed by Manchesters, Sonic Boom Six. These are a band who are really beginning to make an impact in the UK. They take pride on breaking down barriers between genres and combine a more traditional ska sound, with hip hop, rock and samples to bring about an interesting proposition, which is combined with really energetic stage presence. Although this was not their typical audience they were well received and their genre crossover could see them appealing to more mainstream audiences. These are hotly tipped so you are likely to be hearing a lot more about them in the near future.

Another hotly tipped band, and also one of my favourite UK bands at the moment is the King Blues. These are a fantastic live band and it's really in a live environment where they need to be seen to be fully appreciated. Good musicianship and catchy melodies provide a solid platform for a band with impressive stage presence and a good front man. They remind me quite a lot of King Prawn in many ways as they are quite experimental with the instruments they use (ukulele, lots of percussion) and in that they also combine more chilled out reggae sound with more upbeat punk edged songs. Tracks such as 'Mr Music Man' could certainly do well commercially, but there is more to this band than catchy songs and I would suggest the reggae fuelled anti-bnp number, 'Come Fi Di Youth' or the equally political, 'Blood on My Hands' as songs that really display the immense potential of the King Blues. I'm very much looking forward to a new album later in the year.

sonic boom six

And to wrap up proceedings superbly came the Beat. By this point I was pretty pissed as were most of the now pretty busy main tent. There was an air of anticipation and no one was disappointed, with a performance that was one of the best I've seen in a long time from any band.

Ranking Roger is a great front man and his son, ranking Junior was equally as good at working the crowd and it made for a great showing. Their reggae/ska sound was a perfect end to a great day. They threw in a top cover of 'Rock the Casbah' which went down a treat and I along with the rest of the crowd, was buzzing off this performance.

the king blues

SUNDAY

My hangover meant I was a little late arriving on Sun (we shit out of camping and went back to Manc on the Sat night!). Attilla the Stockbroker was doing his stuff as we arrived, followed by George Borowski.

I was hoping for some Alan Partridge quotes from a band called The Mentalists, but unfortunately this all girl 4 piece didn't deliver on that front. Their sound was difficult to pin down really, with some quite indie moments, some more grungey parts and a bit of a punk edge. There were some decent riffs in some of the tracks, they had two good vocalists and I'd have another listen, despite not being blown away by their performance. Apparently they are on the Glastonbury bill, which I think would be more their type of audience, so keep an eye out for them.

Radio Revolution started a little weakly, but they really came into their own after 2 or 3 songs and produced an enjoyable set of politically fuelled reggae punk. They are based in London but their sound takes a wide range of influences from each members own cultural heritage, which really adds to their sound and I'll certainly be having another listen.

Random Hand

Radio Revolution

Random Hand are a band who are teetering on the edge of big things after incessant touring over the past few years. Their hard work seems to be paying off and they added a huge burst of energy as they launched into a set of metal edged ska punk. These are another band who destroy genre boundaries. They are also impeccably tight after 5 weeks on the road, including 3 in America with the mighty Voodoo Glow Skulls, in which they informed me they had managed to get pissed pretty much every night. Good work! This high energy performance was a real highlight and later in the year they are playing the Leeds/Reading festivals, which I think means that they are officially the biggest band who has ever played TNS. Check them out!

Next up were Goldblade who I have seen so many times, but not particularly recently. They reminded me quickly of just how enjoyable their live show is. The audience participation was great (although I think John Robb may have regretted letting one young boy have the mic quite as much as he did, as he seemed to think he was the new Goldblade front man).

It was very entertaining and songs such as Strictly Hardcore and their new anthem, Psycho are infectious as hell and went down a storm with a crowd, which was far less populated than the previous days, but no less appreciative of the bands.

I missed most of the Cropdusters as I had to go and set up for the after-show in the bar (yes they even let me play this thing), but I was happy I'd had a top weekend.

Sunday's crowd was disappointing compared to Saturdays and I'm not 100% sure if the festival even managed to break even. It's so difficult for smaller festivals to compete, but these festivals maintain their integrity in terms of the bands they book and are not run for profit, which is really commendable. I hope next years festival goes ahead and I hope it builds on this years festival, because the atmosphere was great and it was all organised in the true spirit of punk rock. These kind of things deserve support. Personally I'd much rather go to something like this than your 'big', 'mainstream festivals'. A good balance of new bands and more established acts is surely the way to go if the punk scene is to keep progressing so look out for next years event and get your arse down to it!

Andy

Goldblade
Photo by Big Hands

TNS) You recently played the Strummer Camp festival. How do you feel about smaller festivals in the UK? How can they maintain their integrity in terms of the line up but develop into more popular events?

BB) Yeah, there seem to be a lot more of these small festival deals coming through over the last few years. On a personal level it's cool because they are generally a good laugh and a chance to play to a decent amount of people that you normally wouldn't get to play to. And it's also good in terms of being in a band for tailoring your show to a different setting and getting used to playing a larger stage which is good training for bigger festivals you might get to play. I think with the line-ups what most of the festivals tend to do is pull in a big headliner and hope they'll bring the majority of the people and maybe that means you might get some local bands and newer bands at the bottom of the bill. Sometimes these events are flash-in-the-pan but if you look at festivals like Guilfest, Truck Fest, Unity and Beautiful Days you can see how with a little imagination and good organisation the event can build into something that's part of the annual gig calendar. It's hard for these events to rival the likes of Glastonbury and Reading but there is definitely a place for them in the music scene. Obviously, if there are too many of them people aren't gonna bother to come out; I guess the organisers of these events need to come up with something that makes them stand out. I thought Strummer Camp was cool but maybe with a little more grassroots advertising in and around the towns like Manchester, Bolton and Liverpool within clubs and gigs they might have been able to draw a few more people in. Getting the word out properly about these kinds of events is difficult and costly.

Photo by Tim 'Bev' Bevington

TNS) One of the things I like about the Clash is how they really push genre boundaries. How important is it for you as a band that you continue to do this? Does the crossover in your sound help you to appeal to a wide range of audiences and enable you to play on quite varied bills?

BB) I feel exactly the same way about the Clash. I love the fact they went to New York and heard hip-hop happening and came back with 'the Magnificent Seven', their own punk-funk mash-up version of the electro hip-hop thing. I love that openness to sounds and culture and the boldness to offend purists. It's something that is a direct influence on us, that attitude. To a certain extent since we've become visible within the UK punk scene we've been noted for doing things a little differently and mixing up some original ideas so I think it's very important for us to continue to do so. It's basically who we are and it's intrinsic to why the people who like us like us, so we definitely approach our music with the mindset of creating something original. At the same time we've chilled out a little - with Arcade Perfect it was less important to us than on Ruff-Guide - even though I love a lot of the drum and bass stuff we've put in Arcade Perfect. I think overall we just wanted to write better songs last year than we had the first time around. On Ruff-Guide we just wanted to do this big, show-off mad album that demonstrated how crazy our record collections and ideas were. There's vitality and danger in that kind of thinking which is exciting but there is also a lack of sophistication in the record. So maybe with the next album we'll have more of a mix of the two. Good songs and production with dangerous ideas. In terms of us playing on more varied bills and stuff, to be honest I'd say that without doubt our approach means that if kids are into different stuff than your average punk there is more to get your teeth into with us. We've played drum n bass night and hip-hop nights and parties and dance festivals in Germany and got really good responses. Better in fact than a few times when we've been on ska bills and people have been expecting a 2-Tone style band. That being said, good music is good music and there are a lot of punk and ska bands that could stand up on a dance night and people would enjoy it, it's just that our sound and ideas might resound more immediately in that setting than the majority of other punk bands.

TNS) You recently did a secret gig at ska bar in Manchester. Why was it important for you to pay homage to your routes and how did you enjoy the gig?
BB) Ha ha, we enjoyed it a little too much to be honest mate! We were steaming cos we had got there about half two in the afternoon and were drinking from the off. It was cool because the gig was a chance for us to blow the cobwebs off before we went to Japan but it was also cool for the Ska Bar because it totally sold out. It was great to be able to fill the place up for Random Hand too, cos they're our mates and we've always been massive supporters of what they're doing. We really did enjoy the gig but I wouldn't say it was exactly our best performance. In terms of the homage to our roots, that's precisely why we did it. We've been friends with Em for so long and involved with Bomb Ibiza since the very beginning. I was at the first night back in the day at Squirrels Bar in Fallowfield and always take the opportunity to go to the gigs and club night. I think that what TNS does is great and I feel like Harijan and Fractions have their hearts within that whole thing in the same way that we've grown as a band alongside Bomb Ibiza and ultimately see that as where we're from. It was cool because Bomb Ibiza grew alongside us, as we rose up from Manchester to be more involved nationally, Bomb Ibiza was growing too and there has always been a lot of love and mutual support there. Recently, we've been getting bigger crowds in Manchester so we've been getting booked directly by the universities. It's difficult to consolidate DIY gig promotion with large-scale university promotion and for the first two uni gigs we managed to keep Em involved but the last gig was our first big Manchester show in a long time where we weren't under the umbrella of Bomb Ibiza which sucked in a way, but such is life. We kinda knew this was going to happen so we offered to play the secret gig as a thank you and as a re-affirmation of our affiliation with BI and all that good stuff.

TNS) How do you feel the Manchester punk and ska scene is progressing and how does it compare to other places you have played?
BB) The scene itself has progressed brilliantly because of the hard work of promoters and the gig-goers and the internet forums. When we put on Lightyear, Captain Everything and some others in 2002 about 30 people came. We really needed a promoter in Manchester who was gonna put the work in and make a home for those kind of bands and we really didn't have the time or inclination to do that to that extent. Then, fortunately, over the last few years there has been the Bomb Ibiza thing for punk and ska which grew to fill that spot so in terms of crowds, general awareness of bands and quality of promotion I think that Manchester is excellent. One of the best towns in the UK. There are good scenes in most of the major cities but the mix of Bomb Ibiza, TNS, Say it to my Face and Martin and Pingu and Luke and all the GASH stuff makes Manchester one of the best places right now. And as we well know because of our own experiences with it, more often than not there is too much stuff going on rather than not enough. The DIY promoters all have respect for each other and help each other out which is awesome. There's loads of great bands too coming through like Harijan, John Player Specials, the Fractions, Chewin Bricks, probably some more. But I don't know to what extent those bands would associate themselves with us.

TNS) The future looks pretty exciting for SB6. What can we expect from you in terms of tours and releases in the near future?
BB) We're definitely starting to set our sites over in the States quite a bit. The band was just received there with so much excitement; there was a real buzz that we've never really generated in the UK. So we'll be back over there in October. We're writing for a new album right now which I guess we'll record early 09 but we're also preparing an odds and sods release which will incorporate remixes, demos, rare tracks and all that kind of stuff. Hopefully we'll have that ready for the next Ruff and Ready tour which should be in September and I'm stoked about the line-up for that. Last year we had King Blues, Failsafe and Mouthwash so we're hoping to make a similarly exciting night out this time round, definitely we want Chief from Liverpool. We've been friends with them a long time and they are fantastic. Our label, Rebel Alliance, is really going to get moving as an entity this year and there are a couple of bands we've already got lined up to be working with. We'll be releasing the Babylon Whackers album in July so that's a really exciting prospect. We're all really excited about writing over the next few months for the new record. Laila is insisting she wants more hardcore punk back in the mix so anyone worrying we may get lighter than the last record is going to be very much mistaken. Laila wears the trousers and she wants to rock.

REVIEWS

JIMMY THE SQUIRREL - EP (Do the Dog)

Another cracking release from Do the Dog and this has been spending a lot of time in my CD player. Jimmy the Squirrel offer four tracks of ska/reggae, which are chilled out, but offer great catchy hooks at the right times, top quality vocal melodies and keys, which really add to their sound. This Nottingham based band choose to have no brass and I actually think this helps them to stand out. They are clearly more inspired by a reggae sound than a lot of ska-esque bands I have heard recently, which is great.

Opening track, 'This Ones for You' has been getting radio 1 airplay via the Mike Davies punk show and it's this sort of exposure, which could propel them to a more mainstream audience, which is ever so slightly ironic as "Music We Throw' is all about their underground roots. My personal favourite is 'Two Too Many', which offers some great melodies and a superb chorus, which will stick in your head for days. 'Seat up High' concludes a quality ep in fine style and I can't wait for a full length album. If this ep is anything to go by, that is going to be a real treat!

This is a top quality ep, which I recommend very highly!

Andy

RANDOM HAND - CHANGE OF PLAN (Riot Music)

Intensive touring and good old hard work have propelled Random Hand from being a fine prospect into one of the UKs hottest properties. These guys played one of the first ever TNS gigs around 4 years ago and the immense potential was always there to see, but the past year has seen them fulfill that potential with slots at Leeds/Reading, a US tour with the mighty Voodoo Glow Skulls and this impressive debut album. The live show has gone from strength to strength. I saw them at Rebellion, just a couple of days ago and the response really showed that they have established themselves as real frontrunners in the UK scene.

Their sound incorporates a variety of genres from ska-core to metal and rap and this makes them a diverse and interesting prospect. There isn't really a bad song on this album, but stand out songs include opener and live favourite, 'Play Some Ska', 'Scum Triumphant', the rap metal fused 'Snakes and Ladders' and my personal favourite, 'Anthropology', which begins with a metal riff over a police siren sample. It's one of those songs that sends a chill down your spine and the backing vocals in the pre-chorus are particularly great.

Even 'The Tenant of Rotherwood Hall', which is probably my least favourite track shows how they are prepared to experiment with different sounds, with an almost Gogal Bodello feel to the verse, and it is this variety in sound which makes Random Hand such an interesting prospect.

Make sure you pick up a copy of this, it is great stuff!

Andy

F-BATS - EP

Formerly called Frank Butcher and the Slags (which is a very funny name) F-Bats are an 8 piece ska punk band from Watford. Unfortunately they didn't send me the track names, so I can't refer to them, but this is pretty decent ska-core, which probably has an American edge to its sound. The opener is upbeat and catchy, but the third track probably has a bit more grit to it with rawer vocals, giving it a more punk edge, which appealed to me.

Overall comparisons could be made to the likes of Streetlight Manifesto and perhaps Capdown. There is certainly enough here to rouse a bit of interest, but I would need to hear more to make a proper judgement. They seem to have lots of gigs booked so I'll look forward to hearing them live. Andy

SOUNDS OF SWAMI - EP

This ep has been long awaited here at TNS. Keighly based, Sounds of Swami have established themselves as real TNS favourites after a string of great showings at our band night and this ep really does not disappoint. Opener, 'The Lions Share' is already a huge live favourite and this is a superb recording of a great song. What make Swami so impressive is a diverse range of influences, superb technical ability and song structures, which really shouldn't work, but really do. They seem to jump from a hardcore punk riff into a Tool-esque melody effortlessly and coherently and it really is great to hear. The riff laden 'Political Politeness' follows on well, but it is the hardcore punk of 'Identity Crisis' (which is also on the TNSrecords compilation) which really stands out. The song slips into a dub breakdown, superbly showcasing the diversity in sound.

"Glassroots' has a pure punk verse, but metal guitars make it impossible to pin down completely in terms of genre and 'Bank' brings about real Tool comparisons and offers impressive vocals melodies.

There are also two good demo recordings included for good measure. Sounds of Swami offer an intelligent sound, which destroys genre boundaries and, which grows on you with every listen. This is very impressive stuff!

Andy

DIRTY REVOLUTION - IT"S GONNA GET DIRTY (Do the Dog)

This is a kind of up and down effort from Dirty Revolution. At times it is a strong release but a couple of songs let it down a bit. The upbeat ska opener of 'Dirty Revolution' is pretty cool, but "I love Reggae" is not as strong. 'Failure to Communicate' is a great ska/reggae number, which is probably my favourite. Musically 50p is good, but the anti 50 Cent/Britney Spears lyrics, although I presume they are meant to be funny are a bit cringeworthy to be honest.

'Police' is a good ending, with a quality reggae intro. Overall, I'm not completely convinced by this band just yet, but this certainly has potential and warrants further listening as in it's best moments it shows a lot of positives.

Andy

DREWVIS - FOR THE WIN (Do the Dog)

Drewvis offer acoustic ska, which I must admit didn't hit me straight away (which isn't a bad thing), but after a few listens, the subtle vocal melodies really begin to stick in your head and this CD is a real grower. It's pretty upbeat throughout and I thought it was a nice change to a lot of stuff I listen to. For me, the opening two tracks were definitely the strongest. I can imagine that opener, 'Nearly Departed' would work great as an electric track too, with an upbeat ska riff and a really nice, melodic vocal melody. This one in particular stood out to me and I've been listening to it a lot. The more reggae-esque, 'Resolution' is also memorable. I think that you do have to be in the right mood for this CD, as with lots of acoustic stuff, but it's well worth a listen, with some good songs.

Andy

INTERNATIONAL TRUST - KISS KISS BANG BANG(Stunted Records)
Vitriolic protest punk is gushed out with stammering vocal impact by the opinionated Neil Hanson, as he the harnesses rough rhythm, digital slanting and drilling percussion to produce a party push, a protest nude and some old fashioned punk grit. 'Kiss Kiss Bang Bang', slows down old fashioned punk in order to drill home their bemusement about the bemused mind. International Trust can use this scatty, but piercing single to run home their rustic and self-sure edge. There's No I International Trust', will have you dusting of those old Sham 69 vinyls or stealing someone-else's should you not have any. They might be a world away in terms of football at the moment, but in the punk stakes, International Trust are helping Leeds rival Manchester. Especially in 'Bruce Lee', whereby they match the snazzy, big-sound of underground Manc' outfit The Fractions. British punk is showing more life these days.
David Adair

WEEZER - WEEZER (Red Album - DGC Records)
Rivers Cuomo recently more than ever, has demonstrated that he is very much a man of contrast in approach. Not so long ago, he furtively released a collection of low-key, contemplative home recordings indicating that he is happy to cut a mysterious and thoughtful figure. Yet, all the time, he was adding the cherries to the sumptuous cake that represents another quirky, delving and vocally colourful Weezer album.
This is now their 3rd self titled one, this time it's concealed behind the garish colour of red. Funky and stammering opener, 'Trouble Maker' propels the plight of the troublesome geek and is spunky enough to join the likes of 'Buddy Holly' and 'Island In The Sun' on the growing list of live favourites , at their now much praised shows. The mood immediately flits as the slow cradling lullaby intro' to the light hip-hop/glam rock trip of the egotistical 'Greatest Man That Ever Lived (variations on a shaker hymn)', illuminates the Weezer frivolity that people either love or have become used to. Signs of the old style reflective, music geek extolling tendencies shine out of the tenderized 'Heart Songs', as homage is paid to the artists/bands that gave them the inspiration to create the Weezer way. Flipping between solid soft rock, mischievous hip-hop and straight out geek rock sees this evergreen troupe proudly exclaiming that they haven't changed. A tugging example of the latter category is the slow building 'Thought I Knew'. It sees Cuomo's vocals take on a straining echo to nudge feeling to the fore.
'Cold Dark World' is the deepest urban touching tune on offer and spews out magnanimous, defiant spirit. Cuomo's vocals cut a deeper shape to outdo the clanging guitars and instil a blues touch that bears out life and soul. There is a grandiose touch that stomps through the album, especially in the at times retro guitars and sturdy percussion, hinting that Weezer believe they have a stadium rock edge. They will probably only be content to play 4,000 plus venues when they tour. At the risk of sounding like Graham Norton; "That's for the public to decide now!" David Adair

LOUIS BARABBAS & THE BLACK VELVET BAND - FOUND DROWNED
Found Drowned is either the creation of genius, or insanity. It's definitely an album for those who've experienced enough of life to know that it isn't all about the scent of roses and sunsets. The band state that they believe there are far more love songs than things with which to be in love, and with their debut album, they set firmly on a course to redress the balance. Delivered with the heartfelt passion of a stalker, to a back drop of dark folk music that brings to mind images of misshapen puppets dancing under a sinister moon, there's a wry humour here brings a listener to a point where they feel pride in their own jadedness. The dual vocals of John Louis, and Ali Cegielka complement each other, even as they argue in songs like "Shard Of Glass", a confession of a wife killer, delivered with relish, but little conscience, or, "You Can't Run From My Love", a discourse between a stalker and the object of his obsession. They each get a chance to lead, Ali, stands out in "Letter In A Casket", a song about woman who's lover has promised to return, but never has, John as he later declares that no one could love you more than I, but "Some Could Love You Better". The opening track, "The Tell-Tale Hound" is a story of love, passion, and an un-dead dog. This all leads to the eventual realisation in "Love Struck Me Down" that cupid doesn't cause us to fall in love because he wants us to be happy; he does it because he's basically a sadistic bastard and wants us to suffer. This album doesn't just observe though, it asks questions, such who is to blame, the stalker or the tease? And exactly what would a 6 year old sing as she tortured a kitten to death? Musically the sound is a haunting mixture of folk and blues that is familiar, and yet startlingly original, with guitars, violin, mandolin, and banjo, each appearing in abundance. If you're still wide eyed enough to think that life's going to be good, and everyone will live happily ever after, then this may not be the album for you, but, if you're ready to revel in the tragedy that is the real world, then this is the perfect soundtrack to drink, dance and be merry in misery to.
Mozza

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